

Get Ready for Tito: Indians Nab Terry Francona

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Sunday, October 07 2012 8:30 AM - Last Updated Sunday, October 07 2012 7:25 PM



I'll be the first to admit that I was wrong. I thought that, as I probably put it more than several times, that Terry Francona was a pipe dream for the Cleveland Indians.

Yet here we are on Sunday morning, October 7th, 2012 and the next manager of your Cleveland Indians, Terry Francona.

There are more than several feelings that come along with the previous sentence. There are feeling of excitement, curiosity, hope, bitterness, and anxiousness. I think the best thing to do is explore each of those feelings with the news that says [we have a new manager in Cleveland](#) .

The news of course came to light yesterday afternoon and was made official by the Indians later that day. Because of the postseason, the Indians have declined releasing some sort of official statement, with a press conference slated for tomorrow.

With all of that in mind, let's explore our feelings.

[A NEW LEADER]

Befitting that we are in an election year with the country we live in deciding if the nation needs a new leader. Whether the Cleveland population would have chosen a new leader for their

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baseball team is a moot point because the Indians are a dictatorship, with the few making a choice for the many.

Here's the feeling of hope. The feeling that the Indians have elected a new man to lead the franchise on field and that somehow, someday, the culture of the Indians changes now with a new man. A new figurehead that will go to bat for his team, be their friend when they need it and their parent when they need that as well. Someone who will command their respect and that they will play for with maximum effort.

We know what Francona managed in Boston. For most of his tenure, he oversaw teams that had big personalities, veterans, and decently priced players that were expected to perform based off that price tag.

How will he be able to handle a different group of players? A roster of younger players with no real name recognition. A roster of players who, for two years in a row now have fallen flat on their faces after having starting out strong.

Now he takes over a team that has collapsed two years straight, starting out strong and falling flat on their faces. A team that has motivation issues. A team that lost their manager because they couldn't get motivated enough to play for him.

And as one player wondered... Does this team really need someone to motivate them to play baseball?

If they do, that is the task Terry Francona inherits. If this is a team in needing of motivation, he'll be needing to do that. Regardless of how many years they've been in the major leagues, how much they make, or anything else, he needs to get this team to play to win.

That is the hope that comes with Francona. That he is the voice the club needs. The guiding noise as the Indians navigate through the summer months and into the dog days of the MLB season. The Indians will expect Francona to use what is on the ship to make it to the other side.

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[WHAT IS THE INDIANS GAME PLAN?]

Which brings us to this feeling of curiosity. What are the Indians actually planning on doing this winter to prepare for that summer? The hiring of Francona tells me one certain thing.

The Indians want to win. Let's just pretend that Francona is on board with the idea of building something. Do we really think that he is planning on something that is going to take several years? If the Indians had gone the route of someone like a Sandy Alomar Jr. you could see them taking this offseason and sticking a piece of dynamite into the foundation of 2012's team.

But now the Indians are saying something about what they want to do with this team in 2013 and in the immediate future. They are saying by hiring someone like Francona that they have no intentions on waiting around for another rebuilding effort.

Does this team look like a team ready to contend? We had ideas that they could. But we've seen what happens. We've seen it happen twice. Maybe it is a motivation issue and Francona can get something out of this squad that Acta couldn't. Maybe he can.

But odds are, that this isn't a managerial issue, this is a talent issue. So even though this team has a new manager, they need to get some new pieces. They need to surround this manager with some options that he can utilize to be successful. Terry Francona isn't signing on to build anything other than a World Series contender.

He's believing he can do so with his friends, his pals that are in a position of power. Together with Theo Epstein, the two built something powerful in Boston. Now with Antonetti, he can work with someone he respects and likes.

That right there is the key to this. Again, this team is not contending with what they have right now. There are moves that need to be made and the curiosity is peaking with me. Do the Indians make this move to bring in Francona if they are just going to continue to stand pat with

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this squad? Do they really in their heart of hearts believe that minor tweaks to the 2012 team will net a bigger return?

If they do, then we have to worry much more about this administration than we already have. If they truly believe that what is here right now is fixable by hiring Francona, then this is a sinking ship and Francona has jumped aboard the wrong time. He too like Acta will be thrown overboard at a moment's notice, unless the ship crashes before that happens.

Now that I've used every analogy possible... I'm so curious as to what this means. There has to be a deeper meaning to just hiring a new manager. Perhaps this is the accountability we were talking about. Because now there are no excuses. This is a manager who has won titles, who comes with credentials. Who comes with expectations.

Expectations that must be met, credentials that must be respected, titles that must be duplicated.

You're move, again, Antonetti.

[ALOMAR MISSES OUT]

Perhaps the most draining feeling about this decision is the fact that it prevents Sandy Alomar Jr. from having his dream realized. The six days were fun, getting to see a Cleveland legend in the dugout, being a leader like he was meant to be.

Sandy Alomar Jr. will be a manager in the major leagues. Heck, it could be in 2013 for all we know, but it certainly won't be with the Cleveland Indians. When asked about the decision that was made, Sandy Alomar Jr. simply said that this decision was not about him.

But really, it is. Because this decision was between two men who both were good picks. There is a bitterness in this decision in that I think some of us all kind of hoped that we'd be seeing

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Sandy Alomar Jr. getting the full-time gig. To keep Chief Wahoo on his hat would be something the Indians and the fan base would surely love.

This has nothing to do with him being a legend of the club, someone the fans know and love. There is legitimate outcry of support for Alomar. There is often that idea that some people are just born for the job and from players supporting the idea of playing for him, or former co-coaches endorsing him.

You can't help but feel that there is something there. There is something that is inside Sandy Alomar Jr. that will guide him to become a successful manager in the major leagues.

It just won't be now, it won't be with this team. Sandy has had several other opportunities and has been passed over and each time he has come back and the Indians have been lucky. To continue to move Sandy up the ladder to be in a position where he could be the guy in waiting and almost certainly when it was announced that Acta would not be returning, Alomar became the favorite.

But then Francona entered the picture and the favorite is now in a position where he has to highly consider what he wants to do at this stage of his managerial career.

[SHOULD HE STAY OR SHOULD HE GO?]

I'm anxious because I'd really like the Indians to keep Sandy Alomar Jr. Who wouldn't? The thing is simply this though. The Indians are going with Terry Francona and you know that is a move you don't make for one year. No managerial move you make is for one year. If we all truly believe Sandy is ready to take over a team, and he is, then someone is going to ask him to take over their team.

It may not be this offseason, but it will be soon. And when that day comes, Sandy will take that opportunity because he deserves it.

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But beyond that, Alomar has to make a decision himself. He's been passed over yet again and if there are more openings, he'll surely be interested in those. But even if he isn't or doesn't get those opportunities, does he want to return to Cleveland after being passed over?

Sandy loves Cleveland probably always will. But is he comfortable taking that step back to being what he was this past season and also coaching under the guy that he was passed over for?

That is just a huge question that only Sandy Alomar Jr. can answer. You know the front office brass would love to have him back and whether Terry Francona is good with that or not is another question. But there is that feeling anxiousness. This city loves Sandy, the team loves Sandy, and it would hurt to lose him.

It would have hurt in previous years, but now the Indians were in a position to keep him for quite some time, provided that it is the right selection.

We will forever have to live not knowing if the situation would have been the right one, regardless of how it works out with Francona. To have Sandy Alomar Jr. as the Indians manager in a full-time basis would have been a sight to see and if it would have been a sight that worked out for the best, then it's more than just a warm and fuzzy feeling.

[CLEVELAND DESTINATION]

I get a little bit of a warm and fuzzy feeling thinking about the decision not that the Indians made, but the one they decided on made about them. This was as much a decision by Terry Francona as it was the Cleveland Indians. They hired him, that is for sure, but I keep going back to the idea that Francona was a pipe dream for this squad.

He was a pipe dream because in my mind, not only would the price be steep, but I've been conditioned to think that this isn't exactly a destination worth exploring. Terry Francona wants to come to Cleveland?

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Um okay.

It was said that Francona was either going to Cleveland or back to ESPN, he'd not be taking another managerial post with anyone else. If he didn't go to Cleveland, he'd settle for broadcasting again. But the job was out there and the Indians wanted him and ultimately, Francona wanted them.

The question is why? Is being and working with Chris Antonetti and Mark Shapiro something that really means that much to him? I'm sure it has a part, but there must be something else there.

I'm a little excited that Terry Francona wants to be in Cleveland. It now gives this team a little cashe. They can now say, hey, we've got a guy in Terry Francona who has won some titles and a lot of games and has a track record of success. Come play in Cleveland for him.

This isn't a joke anymore.

There is someone here that holds some weight among the baseball world.

It feels good to be wanted and it feels good to have someone who wants to be with your club.

This is certainly a new era of Indians baseball. Will it be one that we can look back on and be happy about or it will be just a duplicate of what we've dealt with for the past several years.

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Nino has a blog! Give it a visit at [The Tribe Daily](#) , because Shin-Soo Choo will certainly be dancing 'Gangnam Style' somewhere there.

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